

The Baltimore Hearing Society

A Survey of the Past

by

Mary Gresham Machen

3908 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland
1968

Foreword

It seemed unnecessary to inflate this slight sketch with a formal bibliography. The main sources are given in the footnotes, and some information was garnered orally. Particular thanks, however, are due to several friends. A special debt of gratitude is owing to Dr. Olive Whildin, the Society's founder who generously shared with me her reminiscences of its early days. I would also like to thank two of the agency's former Executive Directors, first Miss Artus James who in addition to supplying valuable data about her own "administration", put me on the track of important source material which I might otherwise have overlooked; and secondly, Mr. Jay Cherry both for the information which he gave me and for charitably reading the entire manuscript which has benefited greatly from his criticisms.

Furthermore, I am deeply grateful to Mr. Daniel R. Fascione, Research Director of the Health and Welfare Council of Baltimore, for granting me access to the Council's files where I located a veritable treasure trove of pertinent facts. Thanks are due to Mr. Stanley Hahn of the Radioear Corporation who helped me with the technical aspects of the story.

Last but not least, my heartfelt thanks to Miss Jean Chapman, our present Executive Director, not only for details about the agency as it is today, but for her invaluable assistance in shepherding this paper "through the press".

Mary Gresham Machen

Executive Managers of the Baltimore League for the Hard of Hearing
and its successor organizations

Mrs. Hilda Martin	Executive Secretary	1930-39 9 yrs
Miss Elizabeth Scheiblich	Executive Director	1939-44 5-6 yrs
Mrs. Marian Malakis	Executive Director	1944-47 3 yrs
Miss Artus James	Executive Director	1947-53 6 yrs
Mr. Eugene L. Morrill	Executive Director	1953-56 3 yrs
Mr. Jay Cherry	Executive Director	1956-62 6 yrs
Miss Jean Chapman	Executive Director	1962- 93 - 31 yrs

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

1926

Speech Readers' League of Baltimore is organized.

1927

League is affiliated with American Federation of Organizations for the Hard of Hearing.

League secures first permanent offices - 3 East Center Street.

1928

Full League membership is opened to all persons interested in agency's aims.

Hearing aid demonstration program is inaugurated.

1930

Agency is legally incorporated as Baltimore League for the Hard of Hearing - Board of Directors is organized. Mrs. Thornley Martin, first employee is hired.

1931

Amplifier telephone is installed in League offices for use of deafened public.

1934

Hearing aid loan program for needy is expanded.

League sponsors summer course in voice training.

1935

Battery donation fund is inaugurated.

Group hearing aid is installed in League offices.

1936

First Ward Committee issues report on League to Council of Social Agencies.

League's application for Community Fund membership is rejected.

1937

League inaugurates first capital fund raising campaign.

League joins Council of Social Agencies.

1939

Miss Elizabeth Scheiblich, first Executive Director, is installed.

1940

League conducts second capital fund raising campaign.

Second Ward Committee issues report on League.

Baltimore League for the Hard of Hearing is admitted to Community Fund.

League offices are moved to 522 N. Charles Street.

1941

League donates \$200 to Baltimore City for radiog treatment of hearing-handicapped schoolchildren.

Fees are charged for lip reading classes where feasible.

1944

Director Scheiblich resigns and is succeeded by Mrs. Marian Malakis.

1945

League offices are moved to 322 N. Charles Street.

1946

Junior League of Baltimore opens demonstration nursery school for deafened children - League for the Hard of Hearing provides school with hearing aids on loan basis.

1947

Director Malakis resigns and is succeeded by Miss Artus James.

1948

League for the Hard of Hearing alters name to Baltimore Hearing Society.

1949

Society inaugurates demonstration program of juvenile recreational therapy.

1950

Thalheimer Committee issues report on juvenile recreational program.

1951

Silver Anniversary Year (1952) is opened with dinner at Stafford Hotel. November 17.

1953

Director James resigns and is succeeded by Mr. Eugene Morrill.

1955

Children's recreational program put on regular basis.

1956

Director Morrill resigns and is succeeded by Mr. Jay Cherry.

Society moves offices to 928 N. Charles Street (present quarters).

1960

Society inaugurates speech therapy program.

Association for Children with Communicative Disorders is incorporated and opens Gateway School for speech-handicapped children in Society's offices.

1961

Gateway School is moved to its own quarters, but Hearing Society continues to supervise its finances.

1962

Director Cherry resigns and is succeeded by Miss Jean Chapman.

1964

Baltimore Hearing Society severs all connection with ACCD.

1965

Carton Committee issues report on Baltimore Hearing Society and ACCD.

1966

Baltimore Hearing Society and ACCD unite to form Hearing and Speech Agency of Metropolitan Baltimore.

*1975 - Moved to 2720 N. Charles Street
Hearing and Speech Agency*

1980 - Moved to 2720 N. Charles Street

The Baltimore Hearing Society - A Survey of the Past

The story of what today is the Hearing and Speech Agency of Metropolitan Baltimore begins in 1924 with the arrival in the city of Miss (now Dr.) Olive Whildin in search of a job. A graduate of Goucher and Gallaudet Colleges, Miss Whildin already had had four years' teaching experience in the Rochester (N. Y.) School for the Deaf, but since in 1924 the Baltimore public school system made no special provision for the instruction of handicapped pupils, Miss Whildin¹ applied for the position of history teacher. Fortunately, her unusual qualifications were immediately recognized and instead she was employed as the city's first lip-reading teacher and instructor for hearing-impaired pupils. By the time of her retirement in 1959, Dr. Whildin (who received her doctorate from Johns Hopkins University in 1934) was the Supervisor in charge of education for all physically handicapped children in the city school system. In the autumn of 1924 she began her first year of work with three classes, an oral training class for hearing-handicapped children, and two lip-reading classes; one for children and one for adults, the latter meeting in the evening.

From the viewpoint of this sketch, the last mentioned class was the most important of the three. The future Dr. Whildin's adult scholars were interested in considerably more than their own proficiency in lip-reading. They wanted a work center for the city's hearing-handicapped, associated with a national organization concerned with the problems of hearing impairment. With that end in view, they organized on November 19, 1926 the Speech Readers' League of Baltimore. According to its constitution, the objectives of the new society were:

- To create a Community Center for the hard of hearing.
- To promote interest in and study of speech reading.
- To work for the advancement and welfare of the hard of hearing.
- To provide recreational opportunities for its members.
- To help and foster scientific efforts towards the prevention of deafness.²

Full membership in the new society was at first limited to individuals with a hearing handicap or persons professionally concerned with

¹Biographical details taken from article in Evening Sun, Baltimore, September 12, 1947, and information supplied by Dr. Whildin to writer.

²Constitution of Speech Readers' League of Baltimore (hereinafter identified as S.R.L.B.) Article II.

hearing problems,³ but in 1928 the right to vote and hold office was extended to anyone interested in the aims of the League.⁴ The original organization was very simple. All real power belonged to the society as a whole with the officers being merely agents. The association, however, was soon placed on a more formal basis. In 1927 an Executive Committee was organized which consisted of the League officers and two members elected from the society at large.⁵ The same year the League sought and obtained the coveted affiliation with the American Federation of Organizations for the Hard of Hearing.⁶ Also in 1927 the League secured offices of its own located at 3 East Center Street.⁷

From the outset the Speech Readers' League was a success. Its social life was particularly active. In addition to the regular monthly meetings (where normally, attendance was high), there were numerous less official gatherings: parties, teas, and—in the summer months—picnics. Specialized groups were formed: a card club, a book club, a sewing group, etc. Since aside from a modest revenue from dues, the League had no certain source of income, much time and ingenuity were devoted to fund-raising. There were benefits, card parties, rummage sales, and other projects. Besides supplying needed cash, these affairs provided the members with further recreational outlets.

The League also assisted its members and the hearing-handicapped generally with vital rehabilitation services, all offered free of charge.⁸ Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of lip-reading. Regular instruction classes were held at League headquarters, and "tournaments" were staged more or less frequently. Some of these tournaments were with teams representing other speech reader organizations in nearby cities. In one of these early competitions the Baltimore team captured the prize, "a solid tin loving cup,"⁹ which, alas, is no longer in the Society's possession. Originally, not much attention seems to have been paid to hearing aids. The embryonic state of those devices at that time was probably the main reason. Individual aids were not only expensive—as for the most part they still are—but cumbersome and comparatively inefficient. Since so few people could wear these instruments with any comfort, there was little demand for advice and/or assistance in obtaining them. Nevertheless, the League could and did campaign for the installation of fixed hearing aids in places of public assembly such as churches and theaters. Another service was provided by the Vocational Committee which helped the hearing-handicapped find employment.

³Ibid., Article IV, Section 1.

⁴Ibid., as amended March 16, 1928.

⁵S.R.L.B. By-laws, Article V, Section 6 as amended March 20, 1927.

⁶Minutes of Meeting, September 15, 1927.

⁷Ibid., October 21, 1927.

⁸See statement in League Bulletin, April 1934, p. 2.

⁹S.R.L.B. minutes of meeting, May 18, 1928.

Special attention was given to children. In addition to its own juvenile group significantly called the "Conquerors," the Speech Readers' League endowed a bed at the Fresh Air Farm for the use of a hearing-handicapped child--a project which for the first season (and for several summers thereafter) cost the Society exactly \$25.00.¹⁰ This concern for children was a natural inheritance of the League from its founder, Dr. Whildin. In 1925, in cooperation with the late Dr. M. L. Breitstein, Director of the Health Department Hearing Clinic,¹¹ Dr. Whildin inaugurated on a "small scale" (her own phrase to the present writer) the testing of public school children for possible deafness, and the next year--i.e. the same year in which the Speech Readers' League was founded--the city-wide testing of children was begun. For this purpose, the municipality bought an audiometric device capable of testing forty children at once. In 1926 such an instrument, the first of its kind, was used only in two other cities, namely New York and Chicago.¹² So in persuading the Baltimore city fathers to buy the third, Dr. Whildin achieved a notable triumph in which the Speech Readers' League may be said to have shared vicariously. It should be added that the League and its successor organizations have continued to take a keen interest in these school screening tests which are now conducted in most parochial and some private schools as well as throughout the metropolitan public school system. The society's officials and its volunteers have frequently taken part in the follow-up work, i.e. seeing to it that the hearing-handicapped children, discovered by the tests, do in fact obtain the special attention they need.

In 1930 the Speech Readers' League was legally incorporated under a new name, the Baltimore League for the Hard of Hearing. The regular monthly meetings of the Society at large now became purely social, the agency's business and executive affairs being managed by a Board of Directors which met separately. Once a year the entire League held a business meeting at which time it elected members to the Board of Directors who, serving for a three year term, were eligible for re-election. The Board of Directors elected League officers from its own membership. In addition to the Board of Directors, an Advisory Committee was soon formed.¹³ This Committee appears to have been "composed of representative men and women who approve of and indorse the aims of the League--with no executive duties except such as they may elect."¹⁴

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Dr. Breitstein himself became closely associated with the League. In 1927 he joined its Advisory Council, and after the Society's incorporation, he joined the Board of Directors, serving as its president in 1930-31.

¹²Information supplied by Dr. Whildin.

¹³S.R.L.B. Minutes of Meeting, April 29, 1927.

¹⁴S.R.L.B. By-laws, Article IV as amended March 20, 1927.

The Advisory Council does not appear to have ever met as a group, but the later Advisory Committee, which was made up mainly of prominent medical and welfare officials,¹⁵ did occasionally meet together to give the League the benefit of its corporate advice and assistance.¹⁶ The Committee, however, was not, as its name implied, a subordinate association of the Board of Directors, but an independent parallel organization.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the Advisory Committee was ultimately merged with the Board proper. The truth is, a consultive group not an integral part of the Board of Directors proved to be more of a hindrance than a help. So, in the end, the expedient was adopted of having the Directors, who were qualified to do so, meet, when necessary, as a professional advisory committee.

The newly incorporated League for the Hard of Hearing commemorated its new name and status by hiring the society's first paid employee, Mrs. Thornley Martin as Executive Secretary. Aside from being a member of the League, Mrs. Martin's main qualification was a personal acquaintance with the problems of the deafened. Nevertheless, in spite of her lack of professional training Mrs. Martin served the League well. The association was still very close to its origins and operated more as a private club than a welfare agency, even though it already provided the municipality with important social services that were not available elsewhere.

Among such services was the hearing aid demonstration program inaugurated because of the increased practicability of individual hearing aids. Most dealers loaned instruments known as "demonstrators" to the League, and interested persons would visit the Society's headquarters where, assisted and advised by Mrs. Martin, they would try out different models before deciding which one to buy. Compared with today's audiometric tests, conducted by trained specialists in sound-proof rooms, it was all extremely crude and uncertain. Very likely though, it was as "scientific" as any hearing aid evaluation could be in those days, and beyond doubt, it was a great improvement on wandering wearily from dealer to dealer in search of the "best" aid. Moreover, it was the first service of its kind to be offered in the Baltimore area.

During the decade of the thirties the League's lip-reading classes and tournaments operated along familiar lines while social activity continued to occupy an important place. A mimeographed brochure, begun around 1931 was later expanded to a printed leaflet which kept both members and interested outsiders posted as to the League's activities.¹⁸

¹⁵See lists given in League Bulletin, January 1937, p. 1 and October 1938, p. 2.

¹⁶E.g. in connection with fund raising campaign of 1940. Cf. League Bulletin, January 1940, p. 3.

¹⁷It is true there was some interlocking, several individuals being members of both the Advisory Committee and Board of Directors.

¹⁸For a number of years there was a second mimeographed periodical, Membership News and Views, but this magazine appears to have dealt exclusively with the League's social activities and to have circulated only among members.

In 1935 a group hearing aid was installed in League offices for the benefit of members at general meetings. It was so popular that soon afterwards the Board of Directors authorized the purchase of ten additional headphones.¹⁹ All the same, the steady improvement of individual aids would soon make group (and fixed) instruments obsolete. The increased volume of the League hearing aid services was an indication of the trend. The number of demonstrations appears²⁰ to have mounted steadily. Used aids, donated by members, were loaned to some persons unable to purchase them, and assistance in buying new instruments was extended to others. A battery supply service was made available to aid users who could not afford even this modest expense.

The expansion of welfare services put a heavy drain on the League's meagre resources. In 1936 a feeler was extended concerning the possibility of the League's joining the Community Fund, as the Community Chest was then called, but the application was rejected. The League was candidly told that notwithstanding its admittedly important welfare services, it was still too informally organized to meet even the minimum standards for Fund membership. However, the Committee for the Council of Social Agencies²¹ (upon whose report the Fund had based its adverse answer) also recommended that the League reapply in 1938 when--it was hopefully hinted--the League itself would have remedied the situation.²²

Actually, the League did not reapply until 1940. During that interval, the Board of Directors did its best to comply with the Council's recommendations, but these recommendations could not possibly be implemented without a substantial outlay of cash which the League simply did not have. So, in the spring of 1937, the Board authorized a fund-raising campaign under the direction of a professional money raiser who went to work with great zeal, sending out more than five hundred booklets as well as some fifty letters. No doubt, he felt that the expenditure of so much energy justified the deduction of his \$1200 fee from a \$3200 total, but the League ruefully surveying its \$2000 share, was obliged to conclude that the agency's principal gain had been experience.²³ However, the year 1937 was not entirely fruitless; in October the League itself became a member of the Council of Social Agencies.²⁴ The first step towards admission to the Community Fund had been made.

¹⁹League Bulletin, March 1935, p. 2.

²⁰The fragmentary condition of the sources makes one reluctant to dogmatize.

²¹Now the Health and Welfare Council of the Baltimore Area, Inc.

²²The Baltimore League for the Hard of Hearing; A Report Made to the Community Fund in Connection with the League's Application for Membership in the Fund; Anna D. Ward, Executive Secretary (Baltimore Council of Social Agencies, Inc.), July 30, 1936, p. 16.

²³The Baltimore League for the Hard of Hearing; A Report Made to the Community Fund in Connection with the League's Re-application for Membership in the Fund; Anna D. Ward, Executive Secretary (Baltimore Council of Social Agencies), May 1940 (hereinafter cited as Second Ward Report), p. 4.

²⁴Ibid.

Since the \$2000 raised by the campaign was too small a sum to finance any drastic change, the Directors wisely decided to keep the money intact until it could be augmented from some other source. That source was the generosity of Dr. Thomas Cullen who in 1939 made the League a gift of \$500.²⁵ Twenty-five hundred dollars was more than the League ever before had had under its control at one time, and the unfamiliar opulence engendered an optimism which for once was well-founded. The Directors began looking for a trained social worker to be the League's Executive Director. Employment of such a person would meet a major Community Fund admission requirement. To be sure the cash in hand would at the most cover only a year's salary, and a modest one even by the standards of 1939, but it was hoped that by the following year the League would have other sources of revenue, and that what was already available would be sufficient as a starter. All the same, the League was fortunate to find in Miss Elizabeth Scheiblich an experienced social worker with personal reasons for wanting to move to Baltimore, and who, moreover, was intrigued by the challenge to her capabilities which was presented by the League's plight.²⁶ Of course, in many ways, Mrs. Martin, the League's original manager was irreplaceable. Her enthusiasm and devotion could not be matched at any price. Frequently she had given the League many more hours than her contract required, while her tiny salary had been often in arrears, but perhaps the greatest proof of Mrs. Martin's dedication is found in the circumstance that under her direction the League had reached the point where it needed more expert guidance than she could provide. Mrs. Martin herself recognized that fact. "I've gone as far as I can go," she told a reporter.²⁷

Her successor—more accurately her new superior since Mrs. Martin was to remain as secretary—Miss Scheiblich arrived in Baltimore in July 1939 to take over the League's program of expansion and professionalization. Finding the wherewithal for this program, however, was still an inescapable preliminary. So, in the beginning of 1940, the Board of Directors authorized another fund-raising campaign with a \$10,000 goal. This time, though, there was no professional money raiser. The campaign was conducted by an unpaid volunteer lay committee which managed matters so ably that the goal was over-subscribed by more than \$300. The total expenses were \$559.90.²⁸

This triumph together with the reforms projected by Miss Scheiblich satisfied Baltimore's official welfare leaders, and at its May meeting the Board of the Council of Social Agencies voted to favorably recommend the League's second application to the Community Fund.²⁹ The League's entry into the Fund was officially announced on August 31, 1940.³⁰

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., p. 5.

²⁷The Evening Sun, Baltimore, July 19, 1939.

²⁸Second Ward Report, p. 9.

²⁹Ibid., p. 16.

³⁰The Sun, Baltimore, September 1, 1940.

membership in the Community Fund meant that for the first time in its existence the Baltimore League for the Hard of Hearing had an adequate budget. Offices were moved to a larger and pleasanter location. The hearing aid demonstration program and related projects were expanded. Additions were made to the professional staff. In particular, another full-time social worker was employed--a Miss Jeanette Smith whose special responsibility was the follow-up work connected with the school screening tests. During her first five months of service Miss Smith visited more than three hundred families in order to make sure that hearing-handicapped youngsters received the necessary medical and educational care.³¹ In 1941 the League further indicated its interest in the school hearing tests by donating \$200.00 for help in financing radium treatment in cases of adenoid tissue deafness uncovered by the tests. Such deafness is caused by tissue clogging the ear tubes, and it had been learned that this tissue could be shrunk by radium, thereby alleviating the hearing impairment.³² Then, five years later, the League helped prod the Board of Education into resuming these school screening tests which had been necessarily abandoned during World War II because of the lack of operating personnel.³³

In 1947 a contract was signed between the League for the Hard of Hearing and the Veterans' Administration whereby the League undertook to provide rehabilitation services for disabled veterans in the Baltimore area. These services included "lip-reading, voice and speech improvement, and auditory training." Throughout these same years of the later forties the earlier projects in League offices were continued, but attendance at the regular civilian lip-reading classes was apparently dwindling. The downward curve had been noted³⁴ as far back as 1941--an indication probably of the improved efficiency of hearing aids.

Another instance of this particular improvement may be seen in the decline of the League's purely social activities. Because of the fragmentary condition of the sources, however, it is difficult to trace the exact sequence. Still, one milestone can be noted--the transfer of League headquarters³⁵ in October 1945 to 322 North Charles Street. This building while centrally located, lacked facilities for even modest parties, and consequently, all such affairs had to take place elsewhere. Nearby institutions, particularly the First Unitarian Church, were generous in

³¹Executive Director's Report of April 18, 1941, published in League Bulletin, May 1941, p. 5.

³²Cf. article by Marian Gutman, "Aids Failing Ears," The Sun, Baltimore, February 9, 1941.

³³"Report of the President for 1946" (delivered April 1947), League Bulletin, May-June 1947, p. 6.

³⁴"Executive Report for June 1941" (unpublished--in agency's files).

³⁵Marian Malakis, "The New Headquarters of the League", League Bulletin, (Nov-Dec. 1945), p. 1 and 5.

the loan of space and equipment, but the very fact that festivities could not be held without making special arrangements with outsiders tended to inhibit them. It seems also true, though, that hearing-impaired adults were less inclined to seek companionship chiefly among themselves. The campaigns of the League and similar institutions for the social acceptance of the handicapped was partly responsible for the change. Nevertheless, the main cause was probably the increased efficiency and the wearing convenience of hearing aids.

In 1948 the Baltimore League for the Hard of Hearing changed its name to the Baltimore Hearing Society in belated conformity with the altered name of the national organization, the American Hearing Society, formerly the American Federation of Organizations for the Hard of Hearing.³⁶ Three years later, on November 17, the Society began the commemoration of its twenty-fifth birthday with a Silver Anniversary dinner at the Stafford Hotel. More than ninety persons were present. Dr. Whildin, the Society's founder, together with the other charter members who were able to attend, were the guests of honor. The climax of the festivities was a lip-reading tournament, won by Miss Betsy McNeil, then a Goucher senior (now Mrs. George N. Faubel of Baltimore), who was already famous for her ability to take notes at lectures while reading the professor's lips.³⁷

During these years work with children and young people expanded for, aside from the school hearing tests and subsequent follow-up treatment, little was done in the Baltimore area, even as late as the nineteen-forties to help the hearing-impaired child adjust to his handicap. There were, of course, the lip-reading classes in the regular public schools and the more intensive educational therapy offered in such specialized institutions as the William S. Baer School. After 1946 there was also the Junior League Nursery School for deafened children of a pre-kindergarten age, but this was frankly a pilot demonstration project, and the enrollment was limited to ten children.³⁸ As for the League's own youth organizations, they were dwindling for much the same reasons as the adult counterparts. The children and teen-agers who were able to adjust to the new improved hearing aids now, for the most part, no longer needed or wanted special social support--and needed it desperately--but they could not get it without more expert guidance than that provided by the easy friendliness of the Conquerors' informal gatherings.

In 1949 the Society's third³⁹ Executive Director, Miss Artus James,

³⁶For a later change see below p. 25, footnote.

³⁷See description of dinner in Soundings (formerly League Bulletin), March-April 1952, pp. 1, 3.

³⁸The Baltimore League for the Hard of Hearing loaned hearing aids to the Junior League for use in the nursery school. Cf. Mary K. VanWyck, "The Junior League Nursery School for Deaf Children," League Bulletin, November-December 1946, pp. 1, 3.

³⁹Miss Scheiblich resigned in 1944, her successor Mrs. Malakis in 1947.

undertook to remedy the situation. Miss James wanted two programs of recreational therapy for hearing-impaired juveniles, both to be directed by trained professionals; one program for grade school children and the other for teen-agers. Accordingly, Dr. Merrell Stout, then the Society's president, asked the Council of Social Agencies to consider a request to the Community Chest for the necessary money.⁴⁰ Pending the hoped-for favorable answer, and also, no doubt, to make that answer doubly sure, the Society began its own modest demonstration program of juvenile recreational therapy with funds supplied by the Quota Club of Baltimore.⁴¹

At the time, the demonstration did not seem to be too successful. While the attendance in the children's group was large (so large, in fact that this section was twice sub-divided), teen-age attendance was disappointingly slight.⁴² Then, the illness of the professional leader brought the entire program to a premature close, and even during its brief existence, several meetings had had to be cancelled because of the weather.⁴³ All the same, the Council's study committee gave cautious approval to the Society's request—at least to the extent of sanctioning a five-year demonstration project.⁴⁴

Finding the proper person to direct this undertaking proved to be the major stumbling block. So, it was not until 1955 when Mr. Robert Dombro arrived in Baltimore to direct it, that the children's recreational program really got under way. Once begun, however, the program speedily demonstrated its usefulness. Deafness is a lonesome handicap, and left to their own devices, children with severe hearing impairment are only too apt to spend their leisure hours in a silent world of their own. As is generally conceded, carefully directed recreational therapy is just what such youngsters need, and Mr. Dombro was able to report, "In emotional adjustment and speech understanding 95% of the children showed improvement in some degree." Best of all, many children were helped to the point where they could participate in neighborhood programs with their hearing contemporaries.⁴⁵ At the end of the five-year demonstration period, therefore, the project became a permanent part of the Society's service to the community.

To bring this phase of the Hearing Society's work up to date, it might be added that at the moment the agency guides a teen-age group, known as

⁴⁰Baltimore Hearing Society Recreational Projects, Dr. Alvin Thalheimer, Chairman (of the Study Committee), Ruth C. Pease, Secretary, Baltimore Council of Social Agencies, September 1950 (hereinafter cited as Thalheimer-Pease Report), p. 1.

⁴¹Miss James's information to writer.

⁴²Nevertheless, the handful of young people who did participate in this program liked it cordially. The group continued to meet through the autumn of 1950. Cf. Thalheimer-Pease Report, p. 13.

⁴³Ibid., p. 8.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 17.

⁴⁵Robert H. Dombro, "Meeting Recreational and Social Needs", Volta Review, LXII (1960), p. 330.

the Travellers, which meets regularly and which has between fifty and sixty members. Today, however, there is no permanent group recreational therapy for grade-school children. The Travellers, as their name implies, can manage their own transportation, but younger children must be escorted by someone; even in 1949 transportation had been a "major and time-consuming problem."⁴⁶ However, the Baltimore City Bureau of Recreation and Parks now has its own recreational director for the handicapped, so one may hope that the younger hearing-handicapped children are getting the social training they need in their own neighborhoods. It should also be noted that the society does everything it can to persuade the handicapped youngster to mingle with his normal contemporaries. The Travellers are encouraged to bring their non-handicapped friends to agency-sponsored functions, and all are encouraged to join regular juvenile groups such as the Boy and Girl Scouts as soon as they can do so. Also, when placing hearing-impaired children in summer camps, care is taken not to put so many in one camp that they can effectively isolate themselves from the hearing world.

Moreover, the Hearing Society did not forget the importance of acquainting normal children with the problems of the handicapped. In 1951 it sponsored a "better hearing" poster contest in the city high schools. A reproduction of the winning poster was used to illustrate the cover of a booklet on hearing and noise prepared by an in-service teacher training class for the public school system conducted by Dr. Whilden herself. This booklet was subsequently published under the Society's imprint. Designed primarily for teachers, each chapter provided information about hearing and sound suited to a different age level, together with suggestions for classroom projects and a comparatively wide reference bibliography for both teacher and pupils. One hopes the pamphlet helped to give normal children sympathetic insight into the difficulties of their hearing-handicapped contemporaries, besides teaching them the value of personally cultivating good listening habits.

To return to the general history of the agency. From roughly 1950 to 1965, it was superficially unaltered. The most obvious change was the transfer of the Society's offices to its present quarters at 928 N. Charles Street. The program appeared to offer few novelties. Publicity campaigns were conducted stressing the importance of hearing and how best to preserve it. Special emphasis was placed on helping the deafened to re-enter the hearing world. In addition to instruction in lip-reading and the use of residual hearing, therapy was provided for the voice, together with lessons in speech development and correction. The juvenile social program has been described already. A similar service for adults was (and is) inhibited by lack of a sufficient number of interested participants. One rehabilitation aid, however, which had figured prominently among the activities of the Speech Reader's League was abandoned. The agency no longer operated an employment bureau for the hearing-handicapped. This assistance is today given far more efficiently and on a much larger scale by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation of the State Department of Education.

⁴⁶Thalheimer-Pease Report, p. 8.

Nevertheless, in spite of apparent similarity of the Society's program to that of earlier times, two highly significant changes gradually occurred during the last decade. The first of these was the increasing professionalization of agency personnel. The ever growing refinement of rehabilitation instruction beyond the point where it could be handled by the most dedicated amateur, plus the introduction of highly technical audiometric equipment which could be used only by trained specialists were the main causes. A chain reaction brought other innovations. Because of the rising salary load and the purchase and maintenance of expensive instruments, a scale of fees for most services was gradually introduced. The full charge was waived or reduced in hardship cases, and, at first, Hearing Society members were granted a special reduction. In the end, however, sharp expansion of the Society's work among the needy, together with the ever-mounting costs necessitated collection of full fees from all who could afford to pay them, and the membership rebate was abolished. Abolition of this member rebate had an important unforeseen consequence. It hastened the decline of what may be called the lay segment of the Society. The decreasing interest among hearing-impaired individuals in meeting socially with each other had initiated the process, the professionalization of the operating staff had promoted it, but the elimination of the special reduction for members would seem to have provided the coup de grace. There was now little or no incentive for a hearing-handicapped person of private means to seek out the agency (except to request a specific service such as hearing-aid evaluation prescribed by his own physician), and gradually he ceased to do so. The Society as distinct from the Board of Directors became increasingly moribund, and finally even the Annual Meeting required by law was proxied out of existence.

Paradoxically, as the Society at large declined, the Board of Directors became more active--though its membership appears to have been less subject to change--than before, there being no longer a body of interested and informed lay members, willing and usually eager, to serve a Board term. It was the Directors, therefore, who guided the second great innovation in the agency's program: opening its facilities to all speech-impaired persons whether or not the disability was related to hearing loss. The expansion can be seen as far back as 1957 when a study committee for the Council of Social Agencies gave its cautious and qualified approval to the Society's helping such individuals--at least when the speech handicap was a severe one.⁴⁷ Subsequently, however, the inclusion of the speech-handicapped in any Hearing Society service which might be of benefit to them became a matter of routine. In 1960 a speech therapy program was inaugurated, a project of special interest to a number of individuals who had no hearing loss.

Furthermore, the Baltimore Hearing Society was also concerned with the establishment of Gateway, a pre-school for children with communication problems. This institution had its origin in a part-time program for speech-handicapped toddlers which was inaugurated by the Society in February 1957. The project was made possible by the generosity of the

⁴⁷Baltimore Hearing Society, A Report of a Study, Baltimore Council of Social Agencies, Ellis Ash, Chairman, William C. Martin, Secretary, June 1957 (hereinafter cited as Ash-Martin Report), p. 15.

United Order of True Sisters (Baltimore Chapter) which provided both the funds and service personnel, the Society's chief contribution being the loan of space and equipment. When in 1960 the organizers of this program legally incorporated themselves as the Association for Children with Communicative Disorders--more briefly the ACCD--Mr. Jay Cherry, then Executive Director of the Hearing Society, became the new agency's Secretary-Treasurer. For another year, however, the school continued to use the Society's facilities and the Society managed Gateway's financial affairs under a special procedure worked out with the approval of the Community Chest. After 1961 the connection between the two organizations became more tenuous. In that year Gateway moved to quarters of its own at 515 N. Wolfe Street, and in 1962 Mr. Cherry resigned as the Hearing Society's Executive Director while retaining association with the ACCD. The Hearing Society nevertheless continued to supervise Gateway finances until March 1964 when this last tie was severed. Then for a brief period the two agencies were mutually independent apart from some interlocking on their respective Boards of Directors.

Although the old loose union had not always worked entirely smoothly, neither the Baltimore Hearing Society nor the ACCD were completely happy with their new status. In addition, each agency received many more requests for service than they could handle with their size of staffs and facilities they had then. They therefore requested the Health and Welfare Council to advise them on what to do next. Accordingly, the Council appointed a study committee under the chairmanship of Mr. William P. Carton which issued its report in October 1965. This report is far too exhaustive to be adequately treated in the present brief survey of the Hearing Society's history. Moreover, some of its material is not truly relevant. The Study Committee felt that the problems it had encountered in the course of examining the two societies had extended beyond the responsibilities of the agencies directly concerned. The Committee, therefore, had deliberately included a study of these wider ramifications in the complete report.⁴⁸ All that will be attempted here, therefore, is a brief summary of those Committee recommendations which immediately affected the structure of the Baltimore Hearing Society and the ACCD.

First and foremost, the Committee recommended that the two associations reunite as one agency under a new name and that this new agency be devoted primarily to the social and economic rehabilitation of the hearing and/or speech-handicapped of all ages but with emphasis on children, beginning with the pre-school group--old Gateway's special concern.⁴⁹ It also strongly recommended that all quasi-medical services such as hearing evaluations and the testing of hearing aids be left entirely to hospital-based

⁴⁸Hearing and Speech Programs, A Study of Services and Activities in Response to Communicative Disorders, Committee on Hearing and Speech Programs, William P. Carton, Chairman, Health and Welfare Council of the Baltimore Area, Inc., October 1965 (hereinafter cited as Carton Report, p. 3.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 25.

audiological clinics.⁵⁰

This last recommendation was not wholly new. The 1957 study committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. Ash, had made a similar suggestion, noting that audiological work, being basically diagnostic and closely allied to the medical aspect of hearing loss, is best conducted under hospital auspices. In 1957, however, the only Baltimore institutions capable of administering a proper audiological program were the Johns Hopkins Hospital and the Hearing Society itself. The Ash Committee therefore had further advised the latter agency not to actually abandon its share of the load until the day when the city was better supplied with hospital-based hearing centers.⁵¹ The Carton Study Committee of 1965 felt that that day had at last arrived,⁵² hence its recommendation that the Hearing Society terminate audiological services as soon as practicable. The Carton Committee also recommended, as its predecessor had pointedly⁵³ not done, that the Society abandon its program of lending hearing aids and donating batteries to the indigent, leaving such assistance to state and federal programs of medical care.⁵⁴

These far-reaching proposals could not be digested, let alone implemented, with any great speed. The directors of Gateway and of the Baltimore Hearing Society devoted the winter of 1966 to examining the Committee's report and discussing the advisability of acting on its suggestions. By the spring a merger of the two agencies was agreed upon,⁵⁵ but the necessary legal steps could not be taken until December 1966 when the Baltimore Hearing Society and the Association for Children with Communicative Disorders duly combined to form the Hearing and Speech Agency of Metropolitan Baltimore.

With that union the story of the old Baltimore Hearing Society comes to an end. What began as a small private club composed of a handful of courageous people "gathered around the hearth of their common difficulty for a few hours relaxed social contact"⁵⁶ is now a large official welfare agency with additional responsibilities having at best only a tenuous connection with the "common difficulty" of the original founders. Though the lay section of the old Hearing Society still exists as an auxiliary association to the modern agency, it no longer has any constitutional standing or voice in policy making. All power is vested in a Board of Directors, and personal experience with hearing loss is also no longer one of the qualifications for membership. In fact, the great majority of the present directors are not so disadvantaged, though many are professionally familiar

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

⁵¹ Ash-Martin Report, p. 14.

⁵² Carton Report, pp. 29-31.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 15.

⁵⁴ Carton Report, p. 5.

⁵⁵ Baltimore Hearing Society, Minutes of Board meeting, May 23, 1966.

⁵⁶ Gutman article, The Sun, Baltimore, February 9, 1941.

with the problems of the hearing and speech handicapped, and several have such individuals in their own families.

The objectives of the modern agency admittedly go far beyond anything ever considered by the original society—but because the new association offers assistance to those with speech difficulties even when hearing disability is not a factor,⁵⁷ it does not follow that the basic aim of the parent society, the economic and social rehabilitation of the hearing-handicapped, is neglected or forgotten. On the contrary, this objective is pursued as energetically as ever though often by different means. Some of the services originally offered have become obsolete, others are now more efficiently supplied elsewhere and for that reason are no longer available at the Agency's offices. The latest instance of services being terminated for this cause is illustrated by the recent decision of the Board of Directors to accept the reasoning of the Carton Committee, and turn over all audiological work, including hearing aid evaluation, to hospital clinics, while abandoning the program of assisting the needy in procuring hearing aids and hearing aid batteries to other agencies.

This decision was not an easy one. In the areas of hearing aid evaluation and the non-commercial distribution of hearing aids, the Baltimore Hearing Society had been this city's pioneer, and it is hard for a pioneer to retire even when his successors are outstripping him. It would seem obvious, however, that the various health and welfare departments, now helping the indigent with similar services in other fields, should also provide them with hearing aids and batteries if only to avoid duplication of effort. As for the termination of audiological work: while it is still true, of course, that Baltimore is as yet far from being adequately supplied with hospital-based hearing clinics, yet undeniably, the situation is much better than it was ten years ago, and—after all—the Society at best had been able to carry only a part of the case load. At any rate, the termination of the quasi-medical audiological service will enable the new agency to devote more time to the vital problem of assisting old and young in adjusting to their disability, whether it be hearing loss, speech impairment, or both. And if this basic objective is faithfully followed, it would seem that the Hearing and Speech Agency of Metropolitan Baltimore confirms the old French proverb "the more the change, the more the same."

⁵⁷Growing concern of a hearing society, for the speech-handicapped in general is by no means a local phenomenon. That the trend is nation-wide was formally recognized by the American Hearing Society itself when recently it changed its own name to National Association of Hearing and Speech Agencies.

THE HEARING AND SPEECH AGENCY OF METROPOLITAN BALTIMORE, INC.
2220 St. Paul Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21218
(301) 243-3863

Purposes:

The purposes for which the Hearing and Speech Agency was formed are as follows:

1. To operate as a charitable organization for the purpose of providing aid and assistance to persons suffering from communicative disorders;
2. To cooperate and engage in a general program with other similar institutions or organizations for those purposes; and
3. To engage in investigations, research and other activities designed to alleviate communicative disorders in such persons.

In carrying out these purposes the Hearing and Speech Agency has adopted the following philosophies which shall be reflected throughout the activities of its Board of Directors, staff and volunteers and shall be of primary influence in the development and offering of its services.

Philosophy:

1. The Hearing and Speech Agency is a private, not for profit agency functioning under its own Board of Directors; therefore, it is responsible for itself to itself, as well as to the community at large.
2. The Hearing and Speech Agency is a member agency of the United Way of Central Maryland, Inc. and as such meets the various requirements and responsibilities contained within its agreement with the United Way.
3. The Hearing and Speech Agency is an Equal Opportunity Agency and actively seeks to implement its Affirmative Action Program as it affects composition of its Board of Directors, Board and Agency Committees, staffing, clientele and services.
4. The Hearing and Speech Agency is a community agency and as such bears the dual responsibility of making itself and its service available to the community and of serving as a channel and conduit for community funding and interest to be made available to communicatively disordered members of the community.
5. The Hearing and Speech Agency shall be responsible, together with other community resources for seeking out hearing, language, and speech needs of the community and of encouraging the development of appropriate resources to meet those needs either through provision of needed services itself or through support of the development of such services in other appropriate locations within the community.

Philosophy Continued:

6. The Hearing and Speech Agency, as a community agency, functions within the community and is a part of the total delivery system of the Central Maryland area providing services for hearing, language and speech impaired children and adults.
7. The Hearing and Speech Agency, its Board, staff and volunteers recognize that serving others is a privilege and that this privilege can best be exercised by recognizing each client as an individual and respecting the rights and dignity of each client as an individual.
8. The Hearing and Speech Agency holds the needs and welfare of the people served as paramount. All questions related to service delivery shall be considered in regard to their effects upon the communicatively impaired clients who are our first responsibilities.
9. As part of the total community system of services for communicatively impaired people, The Hearing and Speech Agency continually seeks to maintain positive and active inter-agency cooperation and coordination with other segments of the community, both professional and lay. The Hearing and Speech Agency recognizes the value and appropriateness to the complete service and support of the communicatively impaired person of many and varied types and sites of service and works cooperatively and with respect with these many other providers and service resources.

Objectives:

1. To implement its Affirmative Action program on a continuing basis.
2. To employ appropriately trained and experienced staff members.
3. To provide the necessary and appropriate supervision of its staff.
4. To provide safe, hazard free and pleasant facilities for staff and clients.
5. To provide information to the client regarding agency policies and procedures in order that they may be informed about the agency's philosophy, policies and service delivery practices.
6. To provide information to the client and/or family regarding communicative disorders, diagnosis and remedial procedures.
7. To assist each client and family to obtain appropriate help and attention for problems presented whether through direct service by the agency or through referral to other resources.
8. To maintain appropriate safeguards in receiving, storing and transmitting confidential information and materials.

Objectives Continued:

9. To periodically monitor program quality and effectiveness and to annually conduct program evaluation.
10. To provide information to the community regarding the areas related to its services, the disability areas of its clientele and its goals and objectives.
11. To provide for other agencies and organizations information regarding needs of the communicatively impaired and to cooperate in development of resources to meet such needs.